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SUBJECT: UNAMA OPENS PROVINCIAL OFFICE IN KHOST

REF: 06KABUL 5734

¶1. (U) UNSRSG for Afghanistan Tom Koenigs opened the UNAMA Khost Office, one of nine new UNAMA provincial offices, on January 21. In his remarks, Koenigs highlighted the provincial center's importance to the region, noting its university (being developed), economic activity, and strategic location. According to Koenigs, over 4,000 individuals cross the Afghan-Pakistan border daily to conduct business, visit their families, or for employment. The SRSG highlighted Khost as an example of where residents were prepared to take responsibility for their own security, and applauded the November agreement by which religious and tribal leaders spoke out collectively against violence and condemned terrorist attacks. Citing Governor Jamal's leadership, Koenigs said UNAMA will support the Governor's Conflict Resolution Commission and the provincial planning process. The goal is to help overcome a traditional lack of investment by the international community. Koenigs announced that UNAMA would be working with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) to monitor, investigate and report on all human rights cases, "regardless of the perpetrators."

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador had pressed for the early opening of the UNAMA Khost office following his visit to Khost on November 21 (Ref). The office will facilitate the reach of and engagement with the central government, including through the provincial planning process that will encourage increased central government and international assistance. The office in Khost is the fourth of nine new offices to be opened. Others already opened are in Badghis, Zabul, and Kunar.
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